

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PARIS 00939 111924Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 INR-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PRS-01 /041 W

-----120083 120429Z /61-S

R 111850Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4137
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T PARIS 00939

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UR, FR, IT
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S HEALTH

1. WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO EVALUATE THE RELIABILITY OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION, WHICH WAS PROVIDED TO US BY A WELL-INFORMED FRENCH JOURNALIST WHO HAS REGULAR CONTACTS WITH ITALIAN COMMUNIST LEADERS. WE REPORT IT WITH THIS CAVEAT.

2. OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT ANDROPOV REPORTEDLY TOLD SOME ITALIAN COMMUNIST LEADERS VISITING MOSCOW THAT BREZHNEV'S LEUKEMIA IS ACCELERATING (HE HAS HAD IT SINCE LATE 1975) AND HE WILL PROBABLY NOT LAST MORE THAN A MONTH OR SIX WEEKS. THE FORM OF THE SUCCESSION DEPENDS ON HOW SUDDENLY HE DIES, BUT ANDROPOV THOUGHT THAT KIRILENKO WOULD BE THE MOST LIKELY INTERIM CHOICE AS GENERAL SECRETARY, AND THAT THE WAY IS BEING PAVED FOR THE YOUNGER KULAKOV TO TAKE OVER EVENTUALLY. ANDROPOV REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE CHOICE WOULD IN ANY CASE BE SOMEONE WHO IS OF RUSSIAN, BYLORUSSIAN OR UKRANIAN ORIGIN, NOT KGB, NOT MILITARY. THIS ALREADY NARROWED THE FIELD. SOME FAVORED MAZAROV DESPITE HIS AGE.

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3. THE ITALIANS HAD NOTED THAT BREZHNEV HAD NOT APPEARED SINCE DECEMBER 8 (EXCEPT FOR BRIEF TV FILM CLIP), AND THEY WERE INCLINED TO BELIEVE WHAT ANDROPOV SAID AND ALSO TO SHARE HIS JUDGMENT CONCERNING THE SUCCESSION POSSIBILITIES.
HARTMAN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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